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ABSTRACT

Two teachers (a seventh-grade Language Arts teacher and a university researcher/reading instructor) participated in a collaborative effort to understand the ways in which literature could be used to develop critical thinking in secondary school English classes. The two were part of a group of teachers and researchers working together to develop alternative approaches to instruction to foster literary understanding while examining the effects of that instruction on student thinking strategies, a project carried out under the auspices of the Center for the Learning and Teaching of Literature at the State University of New York at Albany. One of the three main focus areas of the Center was teaching and learning processes, and in this area the two teachers worked along with Dr. Judith A. Langer, director of the project and co-director of the Center. The comments from the two collaborators that are given in alternate sections of this paper reflect on the long process of becoming collaborators, applying to their collaborative journey Judith Langer's designations of the various stances readers assume in the process of creating meaning: (1) stepping in (seeking initial contact with some aspect of the text); (2) being in and moving through (immersing in understanding to develop further understanding); (3) stepping back and rethinking what one knows; and (4) stepping out and objectifying the experience (reflecting on what happened and what made it happen). Time, commitment, and communication helped the educators involved in the project develop as collaborators. The paper concludes with six suggestions for forming a collaboration that could prove helpful to others who follow. (Fifteen references are attached.) (SG)

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National Research Center on Literature Teaching and Learning

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Journeying Towards Collaboration: Back Roads, Fast Lanes, Detours, and Ever-Moving Horizons

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In an interview in Paris Review, May Sarton explained the distinction she makes between writing novels and writing poetry. She described her novels as an attempt to answer a question she poses and the writing as the journey she undertakes to answer that question. She described her poetry more as an arrival--an answer--at a given point in her life. Four years ago, when we were asked to participate in a collaborative effort to understand the ways literature could be used to develop critical thinking in secondary English classes, we were pleased and excited by the opportunity to participate in this research. At the time we did not know each other, nor did either of us know exactly what that collaboration would be. How we would become collaborators and how that collaboration would serve us became a question that could be answered only by engaging in that collaboration. Both of us had read a number of classroom and community research studies based on collaborative efforts between teachers and outside researchers. Much of what we read described the results of collaboration, focusing on students or teachers; but little attention was paid to how that collaboration between teacher and researcher came to be and what effects it had on those participants. As we discovered, there is a tremendous difference between reading the *results* of a collaborative study and *becoming* collaborators. Naming alone did not make collaborators of this practicing English teacher and this university researcher/reading instructor who had been a secondary English teacher.

What we describe here began as an end of Year 1 interview where, drawing on fieldnotes, audiotapes, and journal entries, we began interviewing each other about our experiences of that first year, asking the questions and sharing understandings that had not occurred in our regular debriefings throughout the year. That interview turned into an on-going 8 hour conversation that we audiotaped and then transcribed. Later, we read the transcription of that tape, played back parts of the tape, and continued to reflect on what we had said, what we had written, the stances we had taken throughout that first year, and the effect retrospective reflection had on us. We continued our collaboration in Year 2, recording events in our fieldnotes and keeping researchers' journals and, again, had a "researchers as people/people as researchers" conversation at the end of the year. We have continued this conversation over two more years, even when we were not actively involved in a formal project.

What we found on this journey was that collaboration became a means for us, and for the students who joined us in this collaboration, to author our own learning, to expand our

perspectives about the process of teaching and learning, and to develop an abiding respect and trust in each other. This story, then, is written from our personal perspectives; it is not a report of "one" and "they," but rather of two "I"s sometimes becoming "we."

Our collaboration was a part of a constellation of research projects done under the auspices of the Center for the Learning and Teaching of Literature at the State University of New York at Albany. The Center's mission was to improve the teaching of content knowledge and critical thinking strategies that contribute to literary understanding. As such the Center was involved in research and outreach in three broad areas--current practice, assessment, and teaching and learning processes. It is in this last area that we worked, along with Judith A. Langer, director of the project and co-director of the Center.

In this area of teaching and learning processes, researchers studied the kinds of thinking students engage in when reading a variety of texts. Along with that, teachers and researchers together worked to develop alternative approaches to literature instruction to foster literary understanding while examining the effects of that instruction on student thinking strategies. It is in this area of teaching and learning processes that we worked, along with Dr. Langer.

In a recent study (Langer, 1989) Langer found that in the process of understanding texts, both literary and nonliterary readers engage in a variety of changing stances. The nature of the stances is determined by the varying relationships between the reader and the text and occurr in recursive interplay during the reading of a text. Langer suggests that there are four stances that readers assume in the process of creating meaning. She labels the stances as:

Being Out and Stepping Into an Envisionment -

> where readers attempt to make initial contact with some aspect of the text using prior knowledge or surface features in order to begin to construct an envisionment.

Being In and Moving Through an Envisionment -

> where readers are immersed in their understandings and use those to develop further understandings of the text.

Stepping Back and Rethinking What One Knows -

> where readers use their envisionments to reflect on what they already know.

Stepping Out and Objectifying the Experience -

> where readers distance themselves from their envisionments and reflect or react to the content, the text, or the experience itself.

Langer's research informed our perceptions of what we observed in the classroom. While Langer used those designations to describe the various stances readers assumed in the process of understanding and discussing texts, we found that there were similar recursive stances interwoven into the making of our collaboration. In the process of becoming collaborators we, like Sarton, embarked on a journey of sorts, initiated by the broad question - ***In what ways can literature be used to promote critical thinking and in what ways can the activities of a classroom community foster that development?***

Stepping In

It was the intention of the project director that she, the university researchers, and the cooperating teacher researchers should all be collaborators at every level of the year-long research project. Over the summer we all received copies of the proposal abstract, an outline of the seminar in which we would participate throughout the year, and various related readings that provided us with common ground in theory and methodology. To give us a sense of the work that Judith Langer had done, and to prepare us for the methodology to be used in this project, each of us was provided with a collection of readings which included the following: "Instructional Scaffolding: Reading and Writing as Natural Language Activities" (Applebee & Langer, 1983); How Writing Shapes Thinking (Langer & Applebee, 1987)); and "Envisionment: A Reader-Based View of Comprehension" (Langer, 1987). As the year went on, all of us on the research team brought in journal articles, newspaper clippings, and chapters to share that we thought would be of interest to the group. What we also had in common, though we did not know it at the time, was a similar sense of uncertainty. Both of us wondered exactly what the project entailed and what our involvement would be.

Francine

By August, I was beginning to feel uncomfortable. I understood the description of what I was expected to do as a member of a research team, but it was the involvement between and beyond the lines of the job description that filled me with questions and discomfort. I had been involved in other research, but I had never been a collaborator before. How exactly would we collaborate? What would that actually mean? Would the teacher and I be able to communicate or would the teacher find me some sort of Laputian, with one eye heavenward and one at my feet, unable to see what was right before me.? What if the students did not want to participate? Would I be a useful collaborator and researcher in all this? How would I be able to accomplish all the work expected of me?

Betty

I remember the early March morning when Judith first discussed the proposed research at my school in search of interested participants. Learning more about ways to engage students in thinking about the literature they were reading intrigued me. The only drawback was that Judith was looking for seventh grade teachers. I had spent most of my twenty years of teaching at the 7th grade level but had just moved to 6th grade where I was finding the new challenge

interesting. But, the project sounded worthwhile so I volunteered. After discussions with my principal and supervisor, I agreed to move back to seventh grade so that I could become a part of this work.

Participating in a research study was a new experience for me, but I started with definite expectations. I pictured myself as a disinterested participant who simply made the classroom available for study. I didn't anticipate that my role would be much broader and more important, and I certainly didn't expect to take so much more than I gave.

My expectations began to change rather quickly. The last week of the school year my supervisor handed me a package of readings that Judith had sent. I looked at the thick packet in disbelief. Was I expected to spend my summer reading? Was I supposed to know all this before September? Was I capable of keeping up with the expectations? What had I gotten into?

Francine

The questions kept coming. I just couldn't visualize my role with me in it. Where would I be working and with whom would I work? I hoped I could return to the school where I'd been the year before. While I had been involved in a research project there, I had developed great admiration for Bob, the teacher I had worked with. His students, too, had been willing and instructive informants.

In early September I met with the other members of the university research team. This was a new team and we were all cordial to each other, but stiff. From my previous experience I knew that the team was a source of support. As doctoral students in education and former classroom teachers, we all had one foot on the shore of research and theory and the other on the shore of practice, a precarious position that sometimes made you feel as though you were about to fall in the water. The project director was experienced in research of this type, reassuring us that collaboration takes time to develop and not to worry if it did not develop overnight. Shortly after that, we had our first full team meeting--university researchers, cooperating teacher-researchers, and the director. It was a warm September day, the kind of day that makes you wish you were still on summer vacation. All of us gathered in a cramped and airless conference room attempting conversation with varying degrees of self-consciousness. When the meeting began, we introduced ourselves around the table. I wondered how many people here, if given the option to participate in the project or not participate at this moment, would bolt from the room.

After our introductions, Judith announced the various collaboration teams. I would be working at the 7th grade level in the suburban district where I had worked on an earlier project. Betty, the teacher with whom I would collaborate, was new to me. My initial impression was that she was a knowledgeable, no nonsense professional. Her voice and her gaze were confident. It seemed obvious to me that *she* knew what she was doing. While the question of the research site was finally answered, other questions took its place attached now to names and particular classrooms.

Betty

My uncertainty increased when late in the summer I learned that the team would be expected to attend three hour meetings weekly, and that the first meeting was scheduled for the afternoon before the first day of school. "What have I gotten into?" ran through my head once more. I really wasn't ready to commit a major chunk of time outside of the classroom to this project. I was giving my classroom; how much more did they want? But deep inside the curiosity that caused me to volunteer six months before now lured me to the first meeting.

That Wednesday afternoon, I trudged up three flights of stairs to the small, stuffy room where the group was meeting. Squeezed around the table were the seven other teacher researchers, the four university researchers , and the director. As I looked around the group, I felt even more uncertain. Where did I fit in? I was a classroom teacher, not a doctoral candidate. Did I have the knowledge to add anything to this project? Did I really want to let someone into my room and expose myself to criticism? Was I good enough? Did I really want to sacrifice time I could be using for planning and marking papers? Was this really worthwhile?

I was also concerned that I would be paired with someone whose view of the classroom would be opposed to my own. I believe in a classroom where students are actively involved, a classroom where we learn from one another. I looked at the four people, and continued to worry. Francine's assignment to work with me calmed some of my fears. She seemed to be a realist--one who understood the "normal" behavior of seventh graders. I wasn't sure I was going to like this experience, but Francine seemed to be the person I could relate to most comfortably and who was most likely to fit into my classroom community.

During the meeting, Judith passed around spiral notebooks that each of us were to use as journals during the research experience. She told us she would collect them about once a month as a way of personally keeping in touch with each of us during the course of the project. Journals? Oh, no, more work!

Before the end of the first meeting, Judith strongly suggested that we schedule two observations before we met as a group again. This meant that I would have to let Francine into my classroom almost immediately, something I had hoped to postpone until I knew my students. Judith's directive gave me little choice but to "hold my nose and dive in."

Francine

Soon after, I made my first visit to Betty's classroom in order to do a series of baseline observations to provide rich description of the physical arrangement of the room, the materials of instruction, the focus of instruction, the teacher, and the students. My purpose was to learn about this community on its own terms, not to evaluate it. I was curious. Being an observer was a safer, more comfortable, role for me than being a collaborator. What struck me first was how busy the school day was here. The schedule of classes is reversed on alternate days, red days and white days, so that visiting a third period language arts class on Monday might mean returning sixth period to visit it on Tuesday, although there would be times when certain events would

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interrupt that schedule. In scheduling my observations, I found the fall schedule full of field trips and other special events. The 7th and 8th grade did not change classes at the same time, so there always seemed to be someone moving in the hall, which added to the sense of busyness. In addition, I learned that students in each class would be grouped and regrouped fluidly throughout the year. My own former class schedule had been quite stable. I met my students at the same time every day of the week in my own classroom which I shared with no one else. I was amazed that Betty could cope with so many constant changes, when it left me dizzy.

During the baseline visits, I was busy gathering information about the way this class worked, what it looked like, and what it felt like. I could tell Betty was nervous by her voice. She spoke both higher and faster than she did in earlier conversations with me. She gave me the sense that she was performing for me. That made me uncomfortable because I didn't want her to feel so ill at ease. In this project we were working with teachers who had been selected because their districts regarded them as excellent teachers and from the very beginning Judith stressed that our goal was to learn about instructional interaction, not to evaluate teachers or students. The teacher part of me could understand Betty's nervousness: being observed had also caused me to feel the need to perform the role of "the perfect teacher."

Betty

When Francine arrived at my door that first time, I was terribly nervous. I wanted to impress her with my ability to "teach" literature. My reputation as a GOOD teacher was on the line. If she was going to sit in on classes throughout the year, she would see EVERYTHING. I wanted the first class to be perfect. I believe that first impressions do have an impact on later expectations and reactions. I barely knew the students, and I didn't know Francine at all. We all had to trust one another, but I was the one taking the biggest risk at that moment.

As the class progressed, I kept looking toward Francine for a reaction. I got none, neither during class nor after it. Did she like the story we read? Did she approve of the way I presented it or the way the students had responded? Did the class behave well? Did the class perform well? I kept looking for a smile, a frown, any suggestion of a reaction. Nothing! I spoke with her at the end of class; Francine revealed nothing of her impression. Was I going to have to spend the entire year in suspense, never knowing what Francine thought? I wasn't comfortable with that.

I hadn't thought about what having another person in my classroom for the entire year might mean. Was I ever going to be able to relax and be myself? Would the students accept another adult on a regular basis? Our building has many visitors throughout the school year, but rarely do we have an outside person become part of the classroom routine.

I was also concerned with how Francine's presence would affect the rest of my teaching team. Because of my recent shift to seventh grade, I was the new member of the team. Although I knew each of my teammates well, I didn't want to start off the year by causing additional pressure. Teaming allows us great flexibility in scheduling and activities, and I wasn't sure Francine was going to be able to adjust to the many changes that would be made to our schedule to meet the needs of other teachers.

Francine

After the baseline visits, I began a routine of coming to the class several times each week on those days when the instruction focused on literature. As Betty and I would schedule the days, I felt breathless looking at her schedule. So much was going on. In those early weeks I felt I needed her to help me navigate through the schedule because I was disoriented by the fluidity of the scheduling, the class grouping and regrouping, and the array of field trips and special events. There was just so much going on, and she was responsible for accommodating her plans to fit it all in.

During the first six weeks of the project, I followed my own textbook notions of what a participant observer should be. It's a role that Judith described as somewhat "schizoid." As a participant, I engaged in joint lesson planning, later debriefing with Betty on how she felt the lesson went in terms of using literature to foster critical thinking. As an observer, I would add my perspectives to hers, sharing what I had seen and heard. Outside of class, Betty's schedule was also hectic.

In those early days we did a lot of tiptoeing around one another, negotiating our roles without ever talking about them directly. I was concerned that I was an obstruction, yet I needed to establish a way to participate without impeding. It is my tendency to be cautious and methodical in new situations, while Betty seemed to be more the risk taker, a stance she later described as "First resist, then hold my nose and jump in." I had no life script for this, though I had a clear notion of what I did not want to be. I did not want to be a collaborator whose purpose, stated or unstated, was ultimately to tell the teacher "how to do it right." I have read enough research to be rankled by studies that claim to come to classrooms simply to observe, to understand, to collaborate, but which ultimately have a specific instructional intervention in mind - a right way to do it. I also did not want to be a collaborator who only came to report on a performance of perfect pedagogy. While I didn't yet feel like a collaborator, I had a guiding sense of what was and was not real collaboration. Each of us had a particular kind of expertise and it would take us time to utilize that in ways that gave us joint ownership - real collaboration.

In discussing ethnography, Spindler (1975) discusses the need to "make the familiar strange" in order to understand the community on its own terms, not simply as an extension of our own experiences. Doing this takes time. I was a classroom teacher; I know classrooms from my own experience. After the baseline visits, it was often an effort to sit in class and not think about what I would do if I were the teacher. It was not so much a matter of evaluation, though perhaps comparison is an implicit form of evaluation, as it was of internalized roles. The teacher part of me made it hard to be an observer when I very much was ready to be a participant in the teacher role. To learn about this classroom community on its own terms, not in comparison to classes I have had, did not happen over night; it took time. I hadn't anticipated this.

During this time it was extremely helpful to have the guidance and support of a project director who assured all of us that collaboration takes time to develop--months, maybe even a year. She gave us not just assurance, but the time to do just that. The university research team met weekly, and we shared our observations with each other. It always seemed in the classroom

that we had seen everything there was to see, but others always had questions that forced us to go back to the classrooms to look again, to look differently, or to look beyond our personal readings as teachers. In those early days we would go to meetings thinking we were full of the answers only to emerge full of new and exciting questions to ask of our research.

Betty

The weekly research meetings continued, and I still was unsure of their value. When I have work to do, I like to forge ahead. The project wasn't like that. It was a long term effort only just beginning to find its direction; a direction that was coming from us. Trust was taking time to mature as well. I had read research studies where the classroom teacher had been destroyed by the critical eye of the researcher. Was that going to happen?

In October the Center sponsored a conference on response-based teaching. Suddenly I was hearing names that were new to me: Mary Barr, Jane DeLawter, Tony Petrosky, Robert Probst, Patrick Dias, all presenters at the conference. Various members of the research team reported on their reactions to the conference. Judith shared books and articles with us that were written by the presenters. Words began to swirl around: reader response theory, envisionment, empowerment, stances, scaffolding. How was I ever going to bring all this together?

As I listened to the university researchers and other teacher-researchers share their thoughts, a new appreciation of each one's special talents was forming. Doralyn presented a detailed report of each speaker at the conference. She had the meat of each speaker's presentation. Mary and Eija had insightful questions, always urging us to deeper thought. Francine had the reading connection. She always seemed to have another reference we could consider. Noreen's clear explanation of terms helped jog my memory and bring back information long forgotten from undergraduate classes. Bob and Judy helped make those classroom connections. We were beginning to move and I was beginning to feel safe within this research community.

Francine

Beyond October I was still impatient for the mythical collaboration to begin. It didn't seem that either of us was especially comfortable with what we were doing, and we hadn't yet achieved the kind of colleagueship where we could talk about it, but we continued and in doing so, began to establish a certain routine. We would talk about the planning of a unit and I would offer some ideas, but ownership for the plan would be Betty's. After class we'd have debriefing sessions to talk about how the class had gone. I could add observations from my field notes and we began to reflect together. The weeks of observing this class from Betty's perspective and from mine gave us a shared data pool. We could see, for example, James, a student who was receiving remedial services who had been unprepared and disinterested initially, had, over time, garnered group support for his growing engagement and understanding. The students were reading Theodore Taylor's <u>The Cay</u> and were discussing the kind of people the main characters were and why they acted as they did. By the midpoint of the second week, James was the owner of the novel the class was reading and, within his discussion group, was prepared to support his

interpretations. One student suggested that Timothy, the black seaman, was being so kind to Philip, a rude and prejudiced child, because perhaps Timothy never had a Mother and he was treating Philip as he wished he could have been mothered. James joined in saying:

> I think that's irrelevant. There's nothing in the story that leads you to that. It doesn't show anywhere why he treats Philip so good. Is it (Timothy's childhood) really important in the story?

We noticed also that while some group work in the first week seemed to veer from the topic, it was, over the longer view, purposeful time. While discussing Philip's childhood, one group spent 10 minutes of their small group time discussing their births and birthweights. As educators, we often extol the need to take risks in order to learn, but we forget how we need to feel safe from ridicule in order to take those risks. This group spent time getting to know each other, and in the weeks to come they also felt comfortable enough to try out new ideas on each other and to disagree and question each other as James did in the example above. And, looking back, we could see that the birth stories were one way that these students were beginning to make connections between their world and the text world. Yet what we saw in the children, we did not yet see in ourselves.

Being In and Moving Through

Just as readers are drawn in and move through an envisionment without conscious realization, we also became drawn into this classroom text.

Francine

I didn't realize it as it was occurring, but I was becoming more caught up in this class. The class became less a comparison to one of my own, and more a fascinating culture unique in itself. By now I knew all the students' names and I was becoming familiar with their particular ways of participating in class. For example, Tina and Betsy usually came in the door already discussing the reading. There was always some topic they wanted to discuss--"Why is Timothy so nice to Philip? He's such a selfish little brat." Corey was also a frequent participant and saw things just a bit differently from his classmates. His comments often initiated lively discussions. Cal often made connections to t.v. shows and horror movies. At first they seemed geared for shock value, but those provocative comments had a way of helping the class think beyond the glib and easy answers.

About this same time Betty agreed to talk at the weekly teacher-researcher group about some of the things she had been working on. I had been so caught up in first establishing my role as a researcher and collaborator in a rather egocentric way and then in the interactions in the classroom community, that I had not had a chance to step back and think about the person with whom I was collaborating. It was an event that was pivotal in my development as a collaborator. That night I wrote in my journal:

> Tonight in class Betty started to talk about what she's been working on and suddenly it dawned on me what Judith's been saying all along--how remarkable Betty is to let me, a perfect stranger with credentials she had to take on faith, into her room to work with her. It's really kind of crazy, like some sort of arranged marriage...
>
> It seems that there's a great deal of trust involved here; trust in the project--trust in our purpose--and trust in me. If I were the teacher, I'm not sure I'd let anyone in my room. I'd be concerned that I'd fall into "being on" and useless to my students and to research because "being on" would not represent what was real...
>
> Tonight when Betty talked about what she was doing someone asked her what she was doing differently. She said she was trying to talk less so that the kids would talk more. Not really a big change, and yet one that was woven into most of her plans for this unit on The Cay, but it's one that seems to have widened her lens as to what kids can do and ways kids can think without total teacher direction. It's a change that's workable and one that opens possibilities for more. It's not the dramatic kind of change that burns itself out. It's a change to build on.

As I became aware of the trust that Betty had in me, I began to distance myself and to be able to reflect on the experience, and to look at this experience from Betty's perspective. Upon reflection, my earlier concerns strike me as so egocentric, yet I am reminded of Bruner's (1986) refutation of Piaget's notions of egocentrism as a stage of development. Rather, Bruner argues, for a child--egocentrism is not a problem of competence, but one of performance. A child has difficulty taking another's perspective when he doesn't understand the situation s/he's operating in. I wonder if, as a novice collaborator, one who had no life scripts to draw upon, this doesn't also apply to adults--to me.

Shortly after this incident, another major event occurred. The class had been involved in lengthy and lively discussions in response to a particular novel. As one of the closing activities, the students watched the filmed version of the novel on a day that Betty was away at a conference. The day before the film, the class compiled a list of issues related to the novel that they wanted to discuss. Betty initiated discussion on their topics the day after the film, but the students wanted to discuss the differences between the novel and the film. Over and over again the students returned the discussion to the differences, while Betty tried to return them to their earlier topics. After class we talked very briefly about what had happened and wondered what would happen if the students were given the opportunity to respond to the topic of greatest immediacy. Sometimes in these early months I had the feeling that Betty was trying to show me the "right way to do it" but that left me out as a collaborator. In my attempts to be the "neutral observer," I had also been leaving Betty out as a collaborator. Wondering together--we became two researchers, a pivotal event in our collaboration.

Betty

This was a pivotal class for me for several reasons. I still wasn't completely comfortable

having Francine in my room. I still wasn't sure I could trust her completely. So, when I came into class that morning, I was determined to avoid a discussion of the movie. I wasn't sure the students would do more than rehash the plot, and I wanted to be sure that they talked about something important for Francine.

The students kept coming back to the film and I kept guiding them back to the book. When one girl finally was able to express her frustration with the movie, clearly she had been thinking about the book, what the author had to say, and how the movie producer had missed the author's point entirely. I realized that in my effort to make the students think, I had actually been preventing them from that thinking. By letting the students lead the discussion, I discovered that they were puzzling over the same issues I felt should be discussed. By giving them room to think, and trusting them to have valuable contributions to make, I was allowing them to reach levels of thinking far beyond my original expectations.

In my journal that night I wrote:

> If you had asked me before the last discussion if I let the students control the discussion, I would have insisted that I did.I learned in the last discussion that I was still controlling, but I also learned that if I truly listen, the students will guide me back to what is important to them. The "kids" really wanted to talk about the movie, but I wanted to talk about what the author had been saying about prejudice. The class kept coming back to the movie regardless of the question I asked. When I finally let them talk, I discovered that the frustrations existed because the students felt the movie had missed the point of the book.
>
> One student was angry because the movie had turned the book into an adventure story and had ignored the important relationship between the black man and the white boy. Another student commented that the book was really about the boy's becoming independent: physically by being able to survive alone and mentally by being able to move away from his mother's views about blacks.
>
> I couldn't have asked the questions that would have evoked these responses. They understood the book, and I just needed to give the arena for expressing that understanding.

But, there was something else that happened in this class. When the frustrated student managed to make her point , the discussion rocketed. I glanced at Francine out of the corner of my eye, and her smile signaled that she was with me. Our collaboration had just taken an important step forward.

Another turning point came for me on one of the worst days of the year. It was American Education Week in November, and I had planned a two-day lesson based on a fable. Francine was there for the first day when we read, took notes, and developed questions for discussion. My department supervisor was also there for a formal observation. Both decided to return the next day to observe the culmination of the lesson when I had planned to have the students discuss for the whole class period.

I work as part of a four-member teaching team and it is sometimes necessary to accommodate the needs of the other teachers on my team. The next day was one of those times. The science teacher needed a change in class makeup for a project she was completing. That meant that the class of students I was facing was a completely different mix from the class I had started with the day before. The science teacher also needed to use my classroom with its moveable wall and tables which left me in a science room with plant projects hanging from the ceiling and stationary lab tables preventing me from forming a discussion circle. Because it was American Education Week, I also had a number of parents observing, several of whom drifted in late because of the room change. We were so crowded that my supervisor was standing at the door peeking around the corner. Room arrangement became an obvious yet important element in my teaching that day. We needed to work in small groups for a short time to consolidate the questions developed by the students the day before. The best we could manage was the movement of a few chairs. Although the students cooperated, the discussion was interesting, yet disappointing. The students didn't soar to the heights I had envisioned. The worst had happened; a lesson had flopped. Francine and I laughed together when it was over. She understood, and I knew I could trust her even when things weren't going well.

Francine

When I arrived before class that day during American Education Week and Betty told me all that would be happening, my head was in a spin from all the changes. But Betty just put one foot in front of the other and I followed her. There was a little confusion initially because the layout of this room with its lab tables was quite different from Betty's room which she designed in a octagon to facilitate discussion. In the interpretive column of my field notes I remarked: "The kids really respond to her surety as she takes charge after the initial confusion".

Despite all the changes, she gave no indication that she was flustered by all of this. Everything in her interactions with the students indicated she believed they could all handle this. The students typically work in groups, then later have an open discussion. I realized how hard it is to have a discussion when you can't see someone's face, only the back of their head, but they tried. In my field notes I wrote:

> This is such a difficult situation - trying to recreate a new ritual in a different environment. The kids do respond. It is a mark of trust and respect that they do this.

For Betty this was a "bad day," but I observed both teacher and students trying hard to make this work under very trying circumstances. The students discussed the differences between fables and short stories, the effect of culture on fables, the purpose of the sparseness of details, and argued over the meaning of the moral, but it was difficult to keep the discussion going. When the class ended, I remember leaving the room with Betty and laughing, the laughter of relief and survival. The only thing missing for this teacher was being asked to tap dance, juggle, and play the kazoo in addition to teaching under these conditions. I felt great respect for both the teacher and the students. To understand the culture of this classroom is to understand that

there are days like this--everywhere.

As a researcher-collaborator, this was a very valuable experience because I could see in my field notes responses from students that evidenced rich thinking and I could share these with Betty. While the difficulty of the the circumstances was the most cogent in our recall, the field notes helped us see beyond. On a day that Betty felt was lost, the field notes revealed that even in difficult circumstances, the students were thinking and the activities and environment Betty provided was supportive even when the initial plans were turned upside down.

I was feeling more comfortable with Betty and I began interviewing the students. It took a month or so to determine which particular class we would work with and which students would be our prime informants. By the time that was worked out, the students in the two classes I had been attending had become quite accustomed to my presence. One of the first days I was there, one of the students nearest me whispered something like "What do we do with her here?" and another group member replied "Just do what we're supposed to do." But the students seemed to take little special notice of my presence for very long. Some would ask me as they came into class what I was doing, but in time they all seemed satisfied that I was, as both Betty and I had told them, there to learn about the kind of thinking 7th graders do when they are reading literature. Although I wasn't actively involved in the lessons -- I didn't teach or contribute to class discussions -- I believe I was an accepted member of that community, a novice learning its ways. Students regularly took responsibility for setting up my tape recorder and making sure my microphone was in a spot for optimal pickup. Students invited me to plays and concerts, volunteered to keep me up to date on what they did on the days I wasn't there, and asked me to sign yearbooks. While it took Betty and me time to be more of our real selves, the students, trusting Betty that I was okay, were their idealized selves for a very short time. I saw some note passing, whispering behind an opened book, doodling; all the typical things that students do no matter what the grade level (as I write this I think about all the times I did this even as a doctoral student). We were establishing a workable routine, and that predictability of routine made us more like a team, pulling together.

Throughout the first two months I had been a participant-observer in the classroom and had interviewed Betty often, but it was not until late October that I began to interview the three student informants. We asked students to volunteer as fellow researchers so that we could learn about the kind of thinking students do and ways to help them develop as thinkers. From the pool of student volunteers, Betty selected two who she felt would be comfortable with the responsibility and would offer diverse, yet representative perspectives. Another student was an intriguing composite of contraries, and with Betty and Judith's approval he, too, became an informant. Later in the year I added two more informants to gain an understanding of this classroom from the perspective of two students receiving compensatory assistance. As our research team grew, so did our knowledge and collaboration. Interviewing the students, asking them to talk about how they were doing, what they were learning, and what helped their learning provided us with information that observation alone did not reveal. Because I had become a familiar fixture in their classroom, and because I think they could sense their teacher's trust in me, the students were not reticent during the 30 minute interviews. From the start they knew that I was not talking with them to secretly evaluate them or their teacher, but rather to learn

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from them. Their contributions provided me with additional perspectives on this classroom community. As with their teacher, the students' responses and their trust engendered my great respect.

Here I confronted a new concern. My research was part of a descriptive case study using participant-observation. In much of the reading I had done, there is controversy about using ethnographic methodology in educational settings. Traditionally ethnographers used this methodology relying on observations and interviews to understand other cultures. Ethnographers gathered data, then compared, contrasted, and analyzed that data, and then finally wrote interpretive ethnographies -- "an ethnographic description that translated an alien way of life into terms that others could understand." (Spradley, 1978, p. 227). But typically those using ethnographic methods do not share their findings with their informants until the end because the purpose is to discover how the community works, not to cause change. While I understood the need for this, it concerned me that not sharing my findings from the student interviews in a general way would give me privileged information which seemed antithetical to collaboration. I was using the methodology to learn about this classroom community, to learn its ways for greater understanding, but I didn't see how collaboration could work if new knowledge was held only by me. If we were truly concerned about the ways literature could be used for critical thinking, Betty and I needed to share all evidence of student thinking. Betty and I could have different roles and responsibilities as collaborators as long as the knowledge gained from these roles was shared. This is not unlike a discussion of literature where various interpretations inform, challenge, and enrich each other. Without identifying the students it was possible to share in a general way the information I had gathered from the students to increase Betty's understanding of student thinking, as well as my own. As long as I did not violate student confidentiality, Judith felt that this would be acceptable.

Betty

Judith had suggested at the first meeting that we might begin our collaboration by planning lessons together. This didn't work for us for many reasons. My school day is packed. Scheduling time to plan with Francine was almost an impossibility. Even more of a deterrent was my ownership of my classes. I knew where I wanted the year to go. I even began my journal for the project by listing my goals for the year. I wasn't about to let Francine sidetrack my plans. So, we established a comfortable pattern for those first months. Francine would meet with me before the class, and I would tell her what I hoped to accomplish. We would meet after the class, and I would respond to her standard research questions.

The early formality of our relationship was the foundation for our later collaboration. As I grew to understand that Francine was not going to undermine my basic classroom structure, I began to relax. Francine also relaxed and began to share some of her insights from the observations. Our debriefings became conversations where colleagues share their perceptions and learn together. Chats after the weekly research meetings became part of our routine, sometimes lasting close to an hour.

As Francine and I built our relationship, I was aware of changes in me. I looked at my

classroom differently. It was almost as if I had another set of eyes. I saw what I was doing, but I was also stretching to see what the students were learning. After the hectic class discussion of the fable, Francine had interviewed the three students, asking each what had been learned. I wrote in my journal:

> Working with Francine has made me see my "kids" differently. When we discuss what has happened in a class, her view brings an entirely different perspective. On Thursday, we talked about the students she is interviewing. She asked them what they had learned. Each had learned something, but only one had learned what I thought I had been teaching. I was hoping that the students would realize that different people interpret literature in different ways. One reported having learned that. The the second learned what made a fable different from other short works, and the third learned that taking notes helped in remembering the important parts of the story. All these were definitely related to the lesson and were valuable understandings. What I learned is to carefully consider what I am doing and to listen more carefully to the students. I thought I was "good" at that, but I think I have a long way to go. I can imagine how difficult it is for students when they think they have learned the lesson, and I test them on something totally different based on what *I* expected them to learn.

Francine also helped me look at student behavior differently. From her distanced perspective she was able to identify students who made valuable contributions to our discussions. One boy appeared to be a particularly vexing behavior problem. He frequently made outrageous statements to gain attention. He was causing me concern because I was unable to focus his energy and intelligence. His classmates saw him as the "class clown." Francine asked to include him as one of the students who would be interviewed throughout the year. He agreed and began meeting with Francine for debriefing sessions. Occasionally, Francine would share with me her pleasure in the fact that this student was taking his role as research assistant seriously. I began to listen more carefully to his responses and noticed that when he was allowed to get beyond his "act," he often had very important thoughts to share with the class. As class discussions became more student directed, and the students were sure that their questions and thinking were respected, this student became more involved. By the end of the year, his classmates had recognized the value of his contributions and had patience to wait out his response until he had made his point. His interruptions became less frequent and he saw himself as a thinker.

Those weekly meetings and all those readings began to have an impact, too. Although I encouraged discussion, I required that the students stay with the text. At the weekly meetings, Judith explained her view of the stances, and Francine and I discussed them further when we met together. I began to see that it was important for the students to relate the story to their own experiences and to build their understandings from what they knew and understood. As I accepted this concept, the class discussions became more valuable, involved more students, included those who had before felt intimidated by the text, and touched on ideas far more complex than I had believed possible for seventh graders to consider. Relating their reading to their own lives helped the students develop their envisionments.

I also began to consider the importance of instructional scaffolding. Francine described my use of it, but I hadn't been conscious of using it. I began to look for ways to support students when they needed support, and to withdraw that support when it was no longer needed.

Stepping Back and Rethinking What One Knows

As we looked back over the Fall, informed by the students' perspectives, there emerged a new clarity. We are two territorial women. We both care about what we do and work hard to do things well. In working at doing things well those months, we attempted roles of perfect teacher and perfect researcher, somewhat unreal versions of our real selves. Yet as awkward as those roles were initially, they were necessary. When you take a journey to new places, you need to adapt. Our idealized roles were what we needed to help us grow beyond ourselves; we just needed to break them in to fit us and ultimately, to transform us. We needed time to do that, and we took the time to figure out what we were to do and how to best serve the research project and ourselves. Time enabled us to build a trust amongst ourselves--researcher, teacher, students--where we could create an environment where inquiry, rather than inquisition, could occur. It was not just that we could take risks and try out new ideas and activities, it was also that we could trust each other in our roles and in doing that, we began to trust ourselves, as well, making ourselves open to explore and learn from each other.

Francine

But in the clarity of retrospect, time apart also served us well. School and university winter breaks did not coincide, which provided us with an extended break. During this time I wrote a first semester report of what I had learned about using literature to foster critical thinking in this classroom. This was a time for me to reflect on my experiences over the past several months and to analyze my field notes and interview tapes. It was a very useful time. In doing that, I had a clearer picture of how this classroom worked and what I was to do to be a collaborator here. Though I was unaware of it at the time, Betty, too, used this time to reflect and to rethink her role.

Betty

I was alone in my classroom now, with time to just relax and experiment. We read some mysteries, created a mystery database, and went to a live dramatic production. It was during this break that I did some thinking about my room arrangement. My November experience had made me very conscious of the importance of seating. I have eight tables arranged in an octagon. From the beginning of the year, the students sat outside the tables for discussion. As I observed, as well as taught, I realized that these tables were providing a buffer between the students and me, and between individual students and classmates. Moving the students inside and sitting with them in the circle changed our discussions completely. Once students became comfortable with the new arrangement, discussions were more involved and more students participated.

The second semester was a totally new experience. Having Francine in the classroom had

given me another way to look at what was happening. Because she was not involved in the lesson, she could see things that I missed entirely. Now I was using an observer's eye as well as a teacher's eye, and this new view of the classroom led to many changes.

The students seemed to have changed, too. They saw themselves as an important part of the research. They were concerned about Francine's absence and anxious to get to work on the project.

Francine

When we started the new semester, we were both eager to return. I had a sense of purpose and confidence that I didn't have in September. I knew something about this classroom community, and I missed being there. When I spoke with Betty on the phone, she, too, said she was eager to get going again. During the spring semester there was a smoothness and a routine that we did not have earlier. The students stayed as a group for most of the semester, the weeks had fewer interruptions for holidays or special events, and I had a class of my own. In early January I began teaching a graduate course in reading. While it was not a literature course, I often found myself thinking about and using some of the same theory put into practice that Betty had used so successfully to enrich student thinking. I moved beyond lecturing to include time for students to discuss their readings in small groups, where they'd take a more active role. More students participated in group discussions and students became more comfortable asking -- not simply responding to -- questions. The activities Betty used to encourage active engagement transferred well to my graduate class. One of my students wrote in her learner's journal something about never taking a course before where the instructor was interested in the student's thinking and how that made her consider what she was learning, relate it to her own life, raise questions and seek answers, rather than learning for the tests she had always done before.

One of the first things I noticed on my return to Betty's class was that the students now sat on chairs in the center of the octagon during large group discussion. Students sat at their tables during small group work, but, without much prompting, moved their chairs to the inner edge when it was time for full class discussion. A new smooth-running routine was in place. As all our routines fell into place, it provided a freeing predictablity. One student took charge of my tape recorder because his seat was more accessible to the plug. During interviews with the student informants, they knew what the next question would be and sometimes said "I've been thinking about that..." or "I know, you're going to ask me..." With Betty, the interviews became more conversational, less inquisitional. But in both cases the predictability of the questions provided new ways of thinking, and a new way of looking at our experiences -- for all of us.

In the Spring I asked Betty if we could videotape one of her class discussions so that the rest of the research team could observe the ways the students were using literature to develop critical thinking. The students were again reading a novel. In class discussion, this class had never run out of ideas before they had run out of time. It was not unusual to hear them moan because class time has ended and then to hear them carrying their discussion with them as they left the room. " Corey, I really disagree with you..." We had trusted these students to be capable of rich thinking and their discussions provided us with ample evidence. It was a trust affirmed.

In other years, Betty's class had been videotaped for sharing with teachers in her building, but this class had never been videotaped. Betty agreed, provided the class wouldn't object. Trust. The students had it in her and she affirmed that trust. It was not a blind trust. The class agreed to be taped, provided they could be the first ones to see the tape and could decide whether anyone else could view it.

Making arrangements for taping provided occasions for us to have informal telephone conversations. During one of these conversations, we talked about the students as collaborators and giving them a more active role in the research. If the students were comfortable with the video, we discussed having them watch their own video as researchers, and talk about what they had seen. And the result was that this heterogeneously- grouped seventh grade class took the responsibility of being researchers of their own practice seriously.

Betty

Making the videotape was another big step for all of us. When I asked the class for their feelings about doing this, they were very serious. I described this process in my journal:

> We sat in the discussion circle, and I opened the issue for consideration. The students were positive about the taping. I was concerned that the camera might intrude on the natural give and take of ideas, but the students dismissed that worry. Their concerns centered on how the tape would be used and who would use it. One student suggested that they view the tape before Francine takes it to the university. The class then talked about their feelings. One student suggested that the class had developed trust and that they weren't sure they could trust the videotape.

The first tape led to a second where we asked the students to become more involved in the research by viewing the first tape and responding to it. What a thrill it was to see the students engaged in thinking and reaching, as Judith would describe it, for the "horizon of possibilities."

Francine

Throughout the year, the research project group met regularly to talk about what we were doing and learning and gingerly talking about problems. It was also a time to discuss various research reports related to the use of literature in classrooms. Being able to refer to this theory and research gave us another form of common ground. But in the second semester some of our meeting time became devoted to responding to literature readers, not teachers. The full research team spent time reading and responding to literature in groups led by the project director. Not only did this provide demonstrations of possibilities to use in classrooms, but it also provided an opportunity to discuss and share as a group of literate individuals. It became apparent to us that in discussing and responding to what we had read, our understandings grew and changed and became richer because our shared individual experiences enriched each other. In discussion, the group went well beyond what would have been achieved in answering the end of selection

questions typically found in literature anthologies, as well as beyond our own initial personal interpretations. Our group had the opportunity to feel the power of using literature for critical thinking, not as authorities on meaning, or sources of ultimate answers, but as insiders. It was an experience quite distinctly different from the way most of us had experienced literature in our years as students, or in our teacher preparation, and for us it was a necessary experience in order to move from outside to inside.

Betty

Those discussions with other researchers helped me feel part of the group -- a peer. As each of us struggled to make meaning and develop an envisionment, we shared our thoughts -- what we knew and what we didn't understand. I was able to appreciate what my own seventh graders were experiencing. They, too, were sharing moments of coming to know and understand together as thinking individuals.

Stepping Out and Objectifying the Experience

At several points throughout the year we stopped to reflect on what had happened and what made it happen. Often, in evening phone calls to each other to schedule interviews or revise schedules, we'd find ourselves reflecting on our earlier awkwardness, or marveling at the level of participation or content of a recent class discussion. We shared stories of the classroom and of our collaboration with each other.

At the end of the year we decided to take time and interview each other about the experience of becoming collaborators. While we each had questions we wanted to ask each other, the interview was conversational and was spread over two days and eight hours. What we found was that, though we had not really discussed it at length before, there had been great similarity in our experiences of the past nine months. We had both been excited then apprehensive. We'd shared times when we had little confidence that we could become collaborators and both of us blamed ourselves when it did not occur immediately. We'd each worried, what had we done or not done but should have?

Looking back after the first year we discovered a number of factors that helped us develop as collaborators:

Time

It took time to make the roles our own. We both, despite the assurance of our project leader, were frustrated that it took so long. Having an experienced project leader, who did not waiver in her belief that we could become collaborators, and who "nudged" us to rethink our assumptions, gave us both the time and freedom to make the collaboration our own. We were given the opportunity to develop trust in each other.

The time it took was both time together and time apart. To become a collaborator with both teacher and students took a commitment of time to get to know each other; a weekly visit was not enough. Throughout much of the fall semester of Year 1, we were in the classroom together and/or involved in teacher/student interviews three days a week. In Year 2 we were together even more. Interactions were observed over time, which led to an opportunity to understand how this community worked and what it valued. To see quiet students begin to participate, to see ways students began to know each other through the sharing would not have been possible in a two week "blitzkrieg."

One day in November of Year 1, Betty asked her students to write to her, telling her about what they had learned and to talk about whether various activities had helped them as learners. One capable student wrote that the small group discussion had helped her realize "how smart the kids in my group are." This was not an elite group of students, but rather one where students had the opportunity to respond to text and to each other, not simply reduce the students to right answer robots. Betty created a class time where the students were treated as thinkers and were provided with opportunities to think, to ask questions, to listen to each other, to collaborate with each other. In describing this collaboration as it occurred in class discussion, one student said:

> If you heard somebody else's idea, you could see how they thought that way and maybe you'd incorporate it into your own.

The time factor was not only time spent together, but also time spent apart. Due to differences in school and university vacations, we had an extended winter break. This time gave Francine a chance to review fieldnotes, and to step back from the experiences and reflect on what had happened. It was also a time to write a report on what had occurred, which formalized those reflections. The break gave Betty some time to try things in her room, to inquire on her own, and for the students to join in that inquiry. Interestingly, that break gave all of us a chance to practice our roles, remove the kinks on our own, so that when we resumed, we were decidedly more at ease.

The second year of our collaboration involved little time apart and this put a strain on our collaboration. There are times you want to try things out on your own, to give yourself as Meek (1988) would describe "private lessons." And there are times you want to be quiet, to work alone, to talk within your own head analyzing what you have done. Those times apart, we believe, refresh the collaboration, allowing time to become eager to begin again. The need for private time does not preclude collaboration, but it took the experiences of Year 2 for us to realize how important it is to strike a balance between the two.

Time to reflect was also a critical factor. Making the time to look again at what had occurred was vital for all of us. For us it was a time to reflect on classroom interactions, which enabled us to see together more than either of us could see alone, and in doing that we raised other questions for continued inquiry into ways to encourage and nurture student thinking. In the factory mode of education--where good teaching is equated with greater transmission of

information--which still permeates much of our practice, time for reflection has not been seen as having value. But this reflective time was also what Lincoln and Guba (1984) and Watson, Burke and Harste (1989) describe as reflexive time, where we looked at ourselves, our interests, and ideologies and their effects on what we did and what we planned to do. It was a way not only to look back, but to contextualize what had occurred and make decisions for the future. Looking backward helped focus our vision on movement forward.

While time was so important to our collaboration, having time in the school day was not a given. We had to work hard to make time. Teachers have busy schedules that often provided very little available time. Students, too, have full schedules. Our student informants had only one study hall a week. Scheduling time for interviews without interfering with other classes was a good deal of work for Betty. The school day was not designed to be "research friendly". Often Francine came to school additional days in order to conduct interviews.

Commitment

Another factor that enabled us was a willingness to try. We had very different styles as we approached something new. Betty describes herself as someone who will "hold her nose and jump in." Francine describes herself in new situations as "slower, deliberate, and cautious." The students ran a continuum between our styles. But all of us were willing to try in our own ways, despite times of doubt and misgivings. It would be false to say we always were in agreement. Francine fretted about the busyness of the schedule with switching classes and regrouping. She had a difficult time adjusting because of the lack of predictability in the schedule, though it didn't seem to affect the students. Betty was concerned about meshing her responsibilities as both teacher and research collaborator, roles which in time were no longer separate. Of all, the students seemed the most willing to try. When given an opportunity to share their thinking, the students had much to say, and what they talked about was a source of wonder and excitement to us. We learned that teachers don't have exclusive rights to rich and deep understandings of literature. For example, in discussing Shirley Jackson's short story "Charles," the students -- a heterogeneous class of 7th graders--initiated a discussion of the child's need to behave outrageously, and whether, in fact, he did behave as outrageously as described. The students discussed the signs and signals the author had given the reader. They shared their own experiences as related to the text, as well as a psychological examination of the parent-child interaction in the story and what life events contributed to it. They explored whether a five year old could distinguish between truth and "stories." They discussed these topics from the various perspectives of child, teacher, and parent. It was a enlightening experience for two adults whose initial understandings had less depth than those of these students.

The students, too, evidenced this commitment and a willingness to try and take the time to also be reflexive about their learning. Corey saw himself in the fall as a reader who "focused on the facts," but the class discussions that focused on the growth and change of student understandings helped him to see that

...talking about understandings helps me understand more...

Cal talked about how being asked to support his ideas helped him. "Being asked 'Why?' made me think more."

Ginny talked about her own deepening understandings "Getting other opinions makes you think more and you have to support what you say." She also noted that the kind of thinking she used in one reading experience, she took with her to her next reading experience. The students were committed to growing as readers and shared their vulnerabilities by talking with us. The two students receiving compensatory services reflected on their growth and change, though in somewhat different ways than the three other students. Both students talked about how small and large group discussion helped them understand. Mike said, "I'd have a question and the large group would argue about it then I could figure it out." Molly talked about using the group discussion to scaffold her own understandings. "Groups helped me when I heard what others had to say, then I reread at home and understood."

All 7th grade students wrote short essays at the end of the year describing any occurrence from that year that had been a significant learning experience for them. We learned even more from those essays. One student wrote:

> My best learning experience this year was in Language Arts. I learned how to discuss topics about a novel or book and how to develop my ideas. We met in discussion groups and talked about different events in the novel, then the whole class would share ideas and argue about why different things had happened.
>
> The reasons why I think this was my best learning experience was because through defending my ideas, I was able to learn more about the novel. I was forced to consider the different possibilities and I had to think about why things happened. I often changed my ideas on a subject after listening to other people's viewpoints. This helped me to further understand the book and its meaning. When people questioned me on why I felt a certain way, I had to think hard before I could answer.

Another student echoed the first and added:

> Ever since we have started examining books this way, when I read a book at home, I think to myself about the characters, the plot, and many of the other things that we would discuss in class.If Mrs. Close hadn't taught me this way to examine literature, then I probably would interpret things much differently and not think about them as much.

In addition to a commitment to the research project, there was also a commitment to our professional growth. Throughout the project, we read and shared the materials that were provided for us, as well as providing each other with additional books and journal articles that related to what we were doing. We developed not only a common ground in practice, but one

in theory, as well. Over the years that we have known each other, we continue to share journal articles, books and other resources (including our own experiences) with one another.

But here we need to add a caution: our commitment to the collaboration kept us working at being collaborators, even now that our portion of the project has ended. But our work as collaborators was recursive. Collaboration is not a fixed destination. We learned this in Year 2.

Each of us felt a tremendous responsibility to the research project and to each other, but that commitment sometimes isolated us from each other. When we were unable to make the time to communicate with each other, each of us had a tendency to blame ourselves for any lack of success. At times such as those, it is important to belong to a larger team so that others can help you regain a sense of perspective. In retrospect, we discovered that our own degree of commitment sometimes caused us to cannibalize our strengths as we overfocused on what we lacked.

Communication

While time and commitment were important factors, we discovered after the second year that honest communication is equally important. Midway through the second year we faced a dilemma. Though we very much wanted to continue the level of collaboration we had enjoyed before, we stalled. There wasn't one specific thing that happened, but we experienced a growing dissatisfaction with the progress of the language arts class. Our level of commitment had not changed but, faced with growing discomfort, we each got busier. We individually tried to work through it rather than confront our individual differences and the tensions that were growing. Each of us took personal ownership for the growing distance between us.

After that second year had ended, we finally made the time to discuss what had happened and why. In retrospect, we found many of Glickman's (1990) seven ironies of school empowerment paralleled the problems we faced (and failed to face) in year 2. Glickman found that the more an empowered school improves, the more apparent it is that there's more to be improved. Although we were not aware of it at the time, at the end of year one, we looked at our collaboration as complete rather than a continuing journey with hills, valleys, and detours. If we had realized that detours are a predicable peril on any journey, we would have taken the time to discuss the differences and discomforts as they arose. Instead, we avoided confrontation, let problems grow, and each assumed silent personal responsibility .

Additionally, Glickman (1990) found that the more an empowered school works collectively, the more individual differences and tensions among the staff members becomes obvious. Along with that, he found that the more an empowered school has to gain, the more it has to lose. Similarly, we had developed a successful collaboration in the first year of the project. It left us, perhaps, unprepared for the complexities of the second year. As we continued, we could see that there was yet more to do. But as we continued our work, we discovered differences in understanding what we were about. Our work together was informed by Langer's work, but we came to this joint experience influenced by rather different schools of thought. Betty was an

experienced Junior Great Books discussion leader who was interested in writing process, and cooperative learning. Francine was influenced by the work of Louise Rosenblatt, whole language philosophy, and the writing process work from the University of New Hampshire. There were certain philosophical conflicts that were not even apparent to us until Year 2. While we encouraged students to articulate the different readings of a text, we failed to confront our own differences--natural occurrences--and talk about them. Instead, each of us responded by working harder because we were concerned that confrontation might cause the other to abandon the project. Our sense of ownership of the collaboration, also made us hesitate to do anything that might threaten what we had worked so hard to achieve. While we were bothered by the differences and the tensions, it took us a long time before we decided to talk about it.

Addressing this was not easy, it took time and distance to confront what was, perhaps, the most important lesson of the collaboration: difficulties, conflicts, and disagreements are a normal part of any process of growth and change, just as they are a natural part of the collaborative reading of any text. Had we known that such conflicts do and should occur, we would have given ourselves permission to openly discuss areas of discomfort rather than turn them into occasions for personal guilt. That guilt closed communication and built barriers between us. Collaboration is not simple agreement; it is not always comfortable. It grows out of a willingness to learn with and from each other in pursuit of a shared goal.

While various theories (Applebee & Langer, 1983; Bruner, 1986; Vygotsky, 1978) informed our understandings, the collaboration also provided an opportunity for all of us to theorize. Coles (1985) reminds us that theory, afterall, comes from the same Greek root from which we derive theatre and means "that which we behold." Comber (1988) suggests, research is too full of theory and too short of theorizing. What collaborative research did was provide a teacher-researcher, a university researcher, and students with an opportunity to theorize--to question and explore ways literature could be used to support critical thinking, to hypothesize about instructional situations that foster such thinking, and to begin to refine and extend our own hypothoses. And, in the process, we all came away with deepened and enriched understandings and appreciations of each other as learners.

Stepping In Again

There are things we have seen and learned by taking this journey towards collaboration that occurred as we took the time to write this piece together. Francine wrote a first draft of this paper about her experience of learning to be a collaborator after Year 1, but when the paper was done, she found it hollow to write about collaboration from only one perspective. That first paper was shared with Betty and then we decided to write one together, using our research notebooks and journals as well as transcriptions and audiotapes of interviews and conversations. After we completed Year 2, we returned to this paper to include experiences of that year. We have returned several times since then to this evolving text, discovering more each time.

Betty

Participation in the research project has been a wonderful experience for me. I began the project expecting to be a passive participant. Instead, I found myself actively engaged in classroom research and writing, and I continue to meet with the Center Research Team during the school year. In the very beginning, I was concerned about the time it would take to keep a journal. Little did I realize how important that journal would become. The reflection process involved in writing the journal was valuable, but the opportunity to look back and see where I had been and how I had changed was even more important.

It has been over a year since Francine was last in my classroom. I often think about what I miss by not having her with me. Classroom teaching is an isolated profession. Rarely does someone visit a classroom to objectively observe for the purpose of learning and growing with the teacher. Francine provided a second pair of eyes. She was a friend and collaborator rather than an evaluator. She saw and heard things I missed as I focused on the daily lesson. She helped me view my classroom with a researcher's eye, offered valuable observations and suggestions, and understood the difficulties of meeting more than 100 seventh graders on a daily basis.

What started as a project to look at ways to engage students in richer thinking about literature, developed into so much more. I learned to assess my lessons with an objective eye. I know what I want from a literature discussion and I know many ways to scaffold my lessons in order to reach my goals. I continue to keep a journal where I reflect on my classroom practices: the successes and failures. I know that every lesson may not work, but I and my students can grow from each experience. I was an experienced and successful teacher when I began this project, but I learned that there is always room to grow and expand.

Beyond all of this, I appreciate the importance of collaboration in improving classroom teaching, and the need for teachers to become actively engaged in research, either with their colleagues or with university based researchers. If Francine and I were given the opportunity to continue our collaboration, I would return with enthusiasm but also with new wisdom. Collaborating over a long period of time with a single individual takes trust and patience. During the second year we sometimes strained our relationship because we cared too much. I respected Francine and realized that she was devoted and hardworking. She needed to collect a tremendous amount of data which meant she was in my classroom almost daily throughout the year. This became very wearing for me. I needed time and distance, but hesitated to state my needs. Francine felt my discomfort and experienced her own. Both of us were desperately trying to avoid a confrontation. What we needed to do was take the time to talk out our concerns.

This discomfort colored our relationship. Francine was the one who took the initial risk to bring the subject into the open. I felt immediate relief once we began to discuss our problem. No human relationship is without conflict and stress. It is the open discussion of issues that keeps the relationship growing. Avoidance of the problem causes it to worsen. I have learned the importance of being open and honest about my feelings.

Francine and I were fortunate. We were participants in a research project that gave us time and freedom to grow as researchers and collaborators. It was a rare opportunity. Even now, we continue our collaboration although about 75 miles physically separate us. I continue applying

what I have learned to my seventh grade classroom, while she tries to instill some of her understandings in her graduate and undergraduate students of education.

Francine

Betty and I have had a full range of experiences as we engaged in this collaboration. We've worried about our roles, tried hard to be perfect, rejoiced in finding our way, suffered the pains of both guilt and frustration, and experienced the satisfaction that comes when you don't give up even when the road is rocky and the visibility is poor. I learned so much by being in her classroom and from my on-going conversations with her and with her students. Those years spent in her classroom, and the conversations with both Betty and the students taught me more about teaching and learning than I learned from my own experiences alone. Where I have been with Betty has had an enormous influence on where I am going now as a teacher of teachers. It was, as Betty says, "a rare opportunity." I look forward to future projects and ever-growing collaboration with Betty.

Stepping Out and Objectifying the Experience (again)

There are aspects of forming a collaboration that we've discovered in the doing that might be useful to others who follow:

1. Allow ample time to become and to remain collaborators. You need to give yourselves the proper amount of time. Your collaboration will suffer if you rush either the process of becoming collaborators or the maintenance of the on-going collaboration.

2. It is helpful to learn about what others have experienced in similar situations. If you know in advance that there is a potential for bumpy spots and breakdowns, it's easier to deal with them because they are predictable.

3. Make time for "scenic overlooks." Some of the most useful time we spent occurred when we interviewed each other and took the time to write about what we'd learned about our work. Taking these opportunities to look back at where we'd been helped us to see together a larger vista than we had seen before. Additionally, looking back over where we'd been, gave us a clearer understanding of the direction to go next.

4. Write regularly. It was particularly helpful to keep journals as we progressed. The journals provided a tangible history and a place where some thoughts could be sorted out. We also recommend writing short notes to each other when there isn't time to talk.

Writing together, more than any other activity, helped us articulate the differences in our perspectives and make sense of our experience.

5. Take breaks. Collaborative research is exciting but it is also quite intense. It is necessary to take breaks in order to refresh and reenergize the work you do together.

6. Remember that collaboration is a human enterprise.

For us, collaboration was a journey that followed no straight line, yet it was one that took us to new and uncharted places we hadn't even imagined. One of our student researchers discussed the changes he saw in himself after a year of being in the project:

> In the fall I focused on the facts.... Now I think about all the things that could happen. It (a piece of literature) doesn't end at the end.... Information alone doesn't help you. You'll always be reading more. Thinking about thinking when you read is something you take with you. You use it every time you read. (Stayter & Johnston, 1990).

It was, after all, a journey well taken. And so, we continue to travel and "...learn by going where to go." (Roethke, "The Waking").

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